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STATEMENT OF

**PETER WALKER
VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER
WGN-TV, CHICAGO**

**BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**EN BANC HEARING ON CHILDREN'S TELEVISION PROGRAMMING
MM DOCKET NO. 93-48**

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OH

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. I am Peter Walker, vice president and general manager of WGN-TV, Channel 9 in Chicago. I am here today as INTV's expert witness and represent the Independent television industry.

As an Independent station, the children's audience has always been important to WGN. The "Bozo Show" has been a signature program for us for generations.

Recently, WGN-TV co-produced "Energy Express," an educational and informational program designed for young teens. Therefore, my experience embraces both scheduling programming for children and producing programming for kids.

"Energy Express" constituted a major initiative for WGN. Begun as a local show, it was later syndicated nationally. We spent close to a million dollars to produce 26 episodes and lost a substantial amount. Nationally the program achieved a 1 rating and a 4 share based on Nielsen's 1993 November sweeps, a disappointing result.

Our experience is instructive and underscores the difficulty of achieving a hit show. Several lessons were learned. First, money does not necessarily equate with success. The budget for "Energy Express" was adequate. The production quality was first rate. I would be more than happy to provide the Commission with a tape of the show.

Second, scheduling was not entirely the problem. Of the 85 markets clearing "Energy Express" in the November 1993 sweeps period, none broadcast the program during the "pre-dawn" hours of 5 or 5:30 AM. Sixteen stations broadcast the show at 6 AM and 15 stations aired the show at 6:30 AM. Timing made no difference. For example, in Eugene, on a Saturday, the same station broadcast the show at 3 PM (receiving a 1 rating and 2 share) and at 6:30 AM (receiving a 1 rating and much higher 12 share). In Baltimore, a station aired the show at 7:30 AM (receiving a 2 rating and 10 share) and at 11:30 AM (receiving a 2 rating and 6 share). During the first quarter of 1994, WGN aired the show at 12:30 PM on Saturday, receiving a 1.9 rating and a 5 share in Chicago.

Third, promotions, while helpful, will not ensure a show's success. The show was promoted heavily by WGN. In fact, the show had its own feature "bulletin board" on the "America Online" service that permitted viewers to contact the producers and ask questions about the program. Promotions did not significantly affect our ratings.

Stations and advertisers were eager to see the program succeed. "Energy Express" did not do well because kids simply didn't watch it. As with all television programming, the success of children's educational and informational programming depends on one fact alone -- does the audience like it.

Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of producers and stations, the failure rate for general entertainment shows approaches 75 percent -- three out of four do not make it. Children's educational shows are no different. But we will be back.

Moreover, the marketplace perceives the need for educational and informational programming. The syndication market has

responded. Using an extremely conservative definition of educational and informational programming, INTV found the number of these programs increased on all television stations, from 576 clearances in 1990 to 1,746 clearances by November of 1993. (See Exhibit A) Looking solely at clearances on Independent stations, these shows have increased in all time slots, with 75 percent of these programs broadcast at 7 AM or later. (See Exhibit B)

As one program fails, others like "Adventures in Wonderland" or the NEA endorsed, "The Adventures of Blinky Bill" take its place. "Blinky Bill," which begins this fall, has been sold to 121 television stations reaching over 87 percent of all television households.

A separate station survey conducted by INTV reveals that during the first quarter of 1994, Independent stations, on average, broadcast four regularly scheduled half-hour programs that meet the educational and informational needs of children. Some of these shows are broadcast five times a week, resulting in an average of four and one half hours of regularly scheduled programs per week.

Overall children's educational specials increased from 19.5 hours in the first quarter of 1990 to 63.5 hours in the first quarter of 1994. Eighty percent of the programs on Independent stations are broadcast at 7 AM or later. As an aside, none of the stations responding to the survey relied on "The Flintstones" or "The Jetsons" to meet their children's obligation.

The message in all this is that you cannot educate and inform children if they will not watch. Also, you cannot force children to watch something they do not like.

Further, for a youngster, or any viewer, television is television and programming is king. Everything that is available to a viewer in the home is competition. Cable networks, such as the "Cartoon Channel," "TNT" and "USA", which are not subject to the 1990 Children's Television Act, routinely broadcast kids animated entertainment programs. You cannot look at broadcasting in a void. The best channel surfers in America are children. National policy should examine the entire television landscape as it exists today.

Finally, stations will broadcast educational and informational programming, if the programming is popular with kids. The key is to educate and entertain at the same time. They are not mutually exclusive concepts. A program, such as "Beakman's World," is in demand because it is both educational and entertaining.

As I understand it, the FCC is debating two major changes to its children rules: 1) adopting quantitative standards and 2) narrowing the definition of what is educational and informational programming.

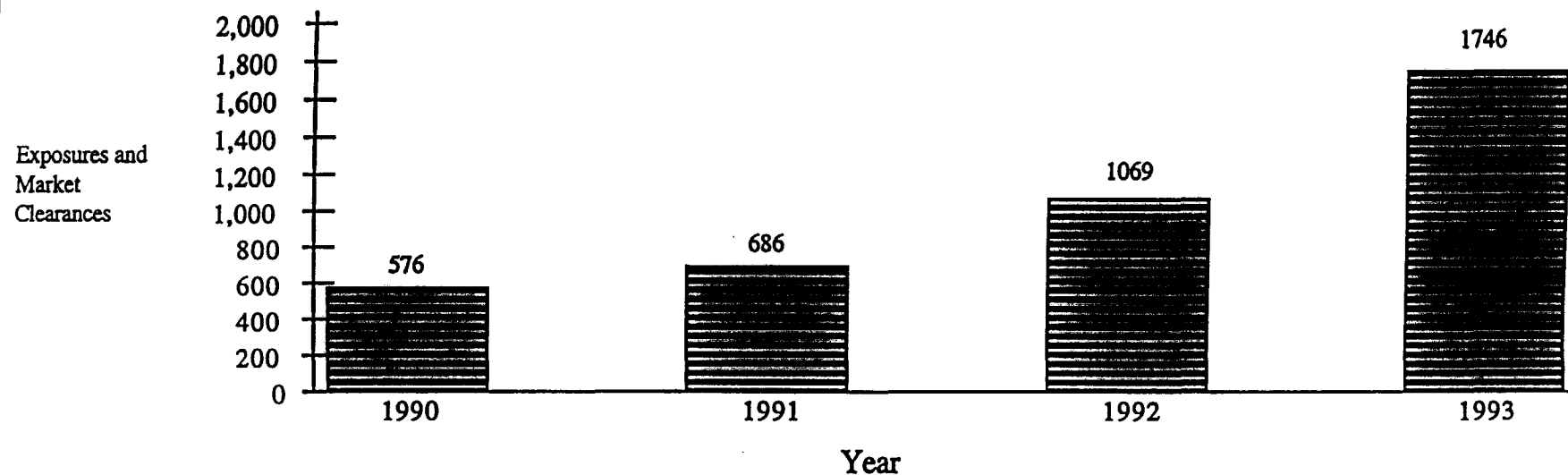
I am not sure you can quantify quality nor pinpoint with certitude what educates and what does not. In the short run, if television stations are straightjacketed and forced by government fiat to broadcast unappealing, but educational programs, the audience will evaporate. No audience -- no advertising. As stations lose revenue, they will no longer be in a position to bid for quality programming. The downward spiral is obvious.

Narrowing the definition would also prove counterproductive. Rules focusing on the "intent" of the programmer have an

"Orwellian" ring to them. These government stipulations may drive quality producers away from the creative process.

The 1990 Children's Television Act has stimulated the market. However, there is a fine line between stimulating and over regulating. The FCC must strike a delicate balance. To this end, INTV and Tribune's proposal for a policy statement encouraging stations to broadcast two hours a week of educational and informational programs should be given serious consideration. We believe this strikes a reasonable balance.

Syndicated Children's Educational and Informational Programs



Captain Planet
 National Geo Special
 National Geographic Assignment
 Peppermint Place
 Quiz Kids Challenge
 WIDGET
 Young Peoples Specials
 Romper Room

Captain Planet
 Captain Planet (repeat)
 Kid's Club
 Not Just News
 Peppermint Place
 Romper Room
 Scratch
 Wide World Kids
 WIDGET
 Young People's Specials
 National Geographic

Beakman's World
 Captain Planet
 Children's Room
 Faerie tale Theatre
 National Geographic Special
 Not Just News
 Peppermint Place
 Real News Kids
 Romper Room
 Scratch
 Jacques Cousteau
 WIDGET
 Young Peoples Specials
 Zoo Life

Adventures in
 Wonderland
 Best of National
 Geographic
 Bill Nye Science Guy
 Captain Planet
 The Children's Room
 Energy Express
 Hallow Spencer
 Nick News
 Not Just News
 National Geographic
 New Adventures of
 Captain Planet
 Peppermint Place
 Real News for Kids
 Romper Room
 and Friends
 Scratch
 WIDGET
 What's Up Network
 Young Peoples
 Specials
 Jack Hannah's
 Animal Adventures

Syndicated Educational and Informational Children's Television Programs on Independent Stations (November Sweeps, 1990-1993)

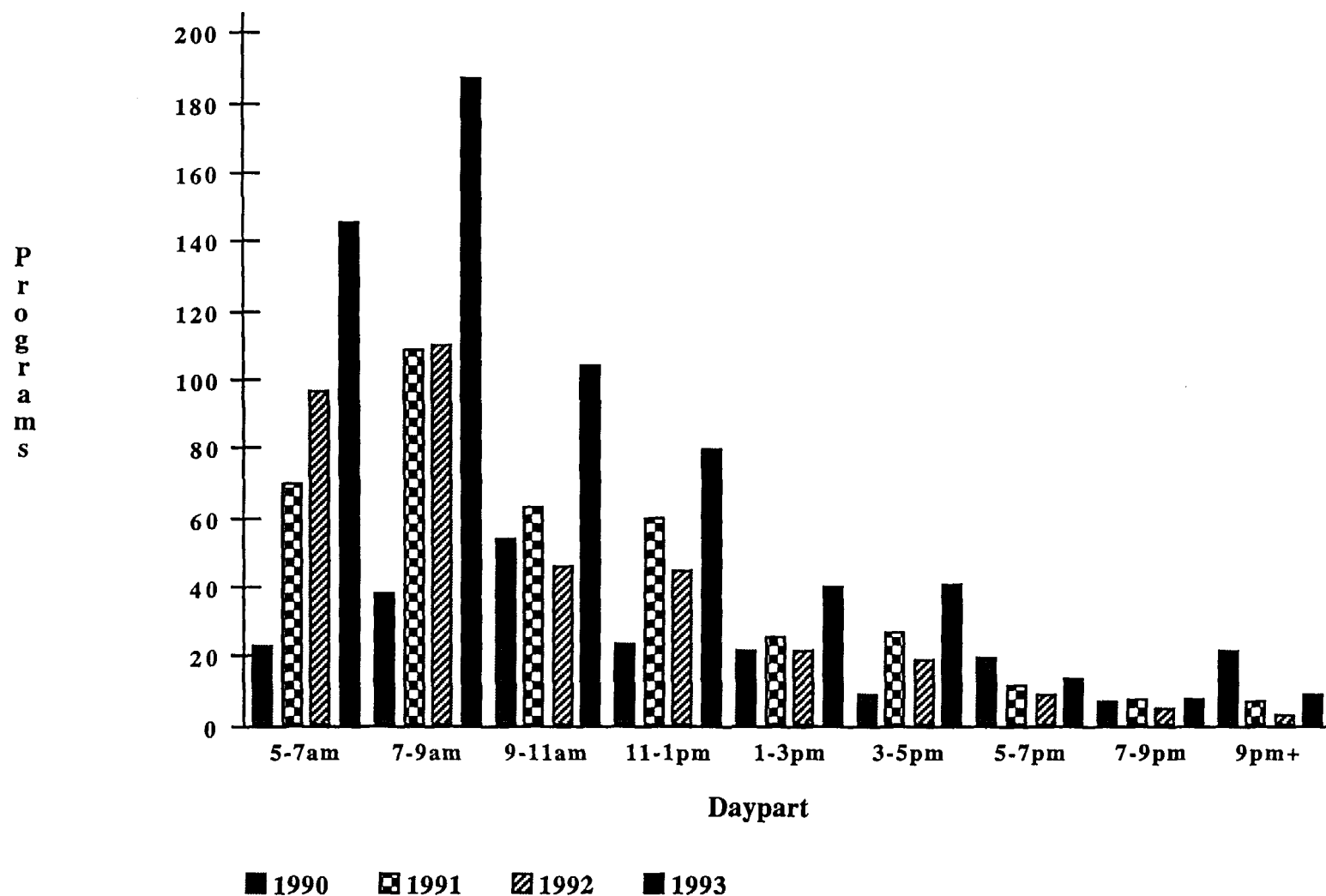


EXHIBIT B